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ABSTRACT

This presentation describes a program at Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU) which successfully prepares candidates for certification in secondary education. It is an alternative plan to the usual four-year undergraduate program. Candidates must have completed a baccalaureate degree with a major in a certification area and must have attained an overall GPA of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. A total of 156 students had been admitted to the program at the time of the study and demographic data were collected using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Self Directed Search. These tests provided data on personality characteristics and career interests. Full data entries were received on 52 students. Partial data entries were received on additional students and directory information was available on others. Data gathered included race, gender, marital status, number of children, graduate degree, grade point average, number of jobs held, bachelor degree concentration, certification area, and scores on the two instruments indicated. Subjects were also asked to respond to questions about their career and educational choices. Frequency distributions and sample answers were recorded in the paper. (Author)

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AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EXCELLENCE: ALTERNATE CERTIFICATION

ATE SUMMER WORKSHOP

Starkville, Mississippi

August 8, 1988

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The issue of alternate and alternative certification is one that stirs the cauldron of controversy when being discussed in the circles of higher education. While there are frequent opinions (Watts, 1986; Hazlett, 1984) that alternate certification will not work and is basically a conspiracy to bring unqualified persons into the classroom, we believe that in certain circumstances, quality does not have to be sacrificed.

Many states are grappling with the challenge of supplying a sufficient number of certified public school teachers for their classrooms. Over twenty-three states have instituted programs of alternate certification, varying in subject matter preparation as well as clinical experience. (Adelman, 1986) These programs are coming under increasing scrutiny and criticism by the teaching profession as well as by the general public. While reform advocates emphasize the need for a strong liberal arts background, teachers in the classroom emphasize the need for a background of strong clinical experience.

We believe that the program described here meets the criteria set above in that liberal arts coursework is not sacrificed, nor is clinical experience. In August of 1985 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved an alternate certification program for the State of Louisiana, after almost eighteen months of negotiations with a committee composed of deans of the colleges of education in the state. Prior to that date, persons with baccalaureate degrees could qualify for "T" (temporary) certificates by passing the N.T.E. The approved plan provides a framework of academic and experiential requirements while allowing flexibility to permit individual universities' policies to remain in place. Minimum standards were set in general education, specialized education requirements as outlined in Bulletin 746 (State Board of Education Guidelines), professional education (including student teaching or internship) and a passing score on the N.T.E.

The program at Southeastern Louisiana University exceeds all the minimum standards. An individualized program is worked out by the Dean of the College of Education after review of the student's application and transcripts. Students must have completed a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution with a major or other concentration in a teacher certification area. They must also have attained an overall grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4 point scale.

The program at S.L.U. favorably compares with similar programs at George Mason University and at Virginia Wesleyan College as described by Culver, Eicher and Sacks (1986).

A.A.C.T.E. (1985) recommends that alternate certification programs:

a) use selective admissions standards
b) employ a curriculum that provides knowledge and skills needed by beginning teachers
c) incorporate a supervised internship
d) assume competency in subject field and professional studies through use of an exam

The program at S.L.U. employs each of these factors. This program is intended for certification of secondary teachers only.

Now that the Alternate Certification Program has been in place for over two years, it was determined that students enrolled in the program shared certain characteristics as well as problems. A total of 156 students have been admitted to the program since its inception. Invitations were issued to each student to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. Demographic data were collected in addition to test results stemming from an administration of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Self Directed Search. These tests provided data on personality characteristics and career interests. From a total of 156 students, full data entries were received on 52 students. Partial data entries were received on additional students and directory information was available on others. The following information was among the data obtained:

Total	**Male**	**Female**
156	55	101
52	18	34

Total	**Caucasian**	**Black**
52	51	1

Total	Married	Single	Divorced	Separated
52	35	14	2	1

Total	Age <=30	Age 31-40	Age 41-50	Age 51-60	Age 61-70
52	19	24	7	0	2

Total	No Children	1-2 children	3-4 children	5-6 children	6+ children
52	23	21	7	0	1

Total	Have Graduate Degree	No Graduate Degree
52	8	44

Total	GPA 2.50 - 2.99	GPA 3.00 - 3.50	GPA 3.51-4.00
52	25	19	8

Total	# Jobs held 0	1-3	4-6	7+
52	9	34	8	1

Total	Business	Arts	Science,Math,Ag	Soc Sci	Health	Techno	Home Ec	Eng Bach.
52	7	2	12	15	2	1	0	13

Total	Cert. Area:	Music	English	Soc Sci	Spanish	Math	French	Art
52		1	7	13	4	6	3	1

Bio/Chem/Gen Sci	Business	Home Ec	Bio/Math/Gen Sci
10	3	1	1

Industrial Tech	Communications
1	1

Total	Certificate Area:	Music	Vocal	English	Soc Sci	Spanish	Math
156		6	1	14	38	5	13
		Home Ec	Business	Option II	Art	French	PE
		6	10	4	4	5	1
		Bio/Chem/Gen Sci		Chem/Bio/Gen Sci		Bio/Math/GenSci	
		25		3		2	
		Earth Sci/Chem/Gen Sci		Communications			
		1		6			
		Industrial Tech		Unknown			
		1		11			

Total	Active and/or Unknown	Inactive/Dropped	Certified
156	125	15	16

Total M-B	ISTJ	ISFJ	INTJ	INFP	INTP	ISTP
52	8	4	5	2	2	1
	ESTJ	ESFJ	ENTJ	ENFJ	ENTP	ENFP
	4	9	7	6	1	3

Total	Self Directed Search					
	Social	Investigative	Conventional	Realistic	Artistic	Enterprising
52	28	11	3	4	3	3

When analyzing entering grade point average, the ranges for this item are shown above. The minimum required grade point average to enter the program is 2.50. This is a higher grade point average than is required for undergraduate education students. They are allowed to have a 2.2 to enter the program, but must have a 2.5 in order to graduate. The mean entering grade point average for alternate certification students is 3.062 for N=52.

When examining NTE scores, a score of 644 is required to pass the General Knowledge segment in the state of Louisiana. A score of 645 is considered passing for Communications. Professional Knowledge requires a score of 645 and each specialty examination requires a different score.
Because students take various segments of this test at different times, the number of students in each sample differs. Mean scores are listed below:

NTE	General Knowledge	Communications	Profess. Knowledge	Specialty
N=42	667	666		
N=22			656.68	
N=15				625.33

Students were asked to respond to four essay questions on the demographic data sheet. The following are a sample of many responses received.

Question #1 Why did you enter alternate certification?

1. I want to be a high school counselor, and you need a teaching certificate first.
2. I want to enter law school and I felt that staying in a formal study program would keep me in mental shape until I have the time and money for law school. Also a teaching certificate would be handy to have.
3. I've always admired teachers.
4. To be able to use my BA to a better end.
5. I liked the idea of getting to teach right away (internship) and it seems like I wasted so much time already.
6. Teaching was like social work (first field) and good hours coincide with when my children are in school.

7. I was recruited to replace a teacher in _____ parish who had suffered a nervous breakdown. I then taught for two more years at different schools with temporary certification. I decided to become permanently certified.
8. I have wanted to teach for over 25 years.
9. To be able to get a career with some sense of permanence.
10. Because I could not find a job in a field pertinent to my bachelor degree.
11. I retired from U.S. Civil Service (NASA) and wanted to be active and useful - I needed a job.
12. I had thought about becoming a teacher for a long time, but the other programs took too long, with this one I can still work.

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Question #2 Why do you want to be a teacher?

1. To become a high school counselor, to have an impact on adolescents at a time when they need focus and direction. To have summers off!
2. I like the academic atmosphere as well as liking students. Also the working hours are the same for my children so I can spend time with them.
3. Because it is a steady job with many benefits and I like to be involved with the children.
4. I feel that I could relate to people in a more personable fashion than some others.
5. I've tried to avoid going into it, but I've always come back to it. It's something I've always wanted to do.
6. My experience as a probation and parole officer has indicated to me that young adults are not being educated to think and reason and it is too late once they finish high school.
7. I enjoy being mentally active and I enjoy exchanging ideas and presenting ideas to others. I enjoy my original major, theatre, and teaching is a way of sublimating some of my original goals. I can practice my craft by teaching it to others.

8. I enjoy seeing children learn and being a part of the process.
9. I wasn't cut out for the business world and wanted a profession where I could hopefully do some good.
10. My parents were teachers and I enjoy working with kids.
11. My present work is frustrating and not rewarding.
12. I enjoy the subject, the interaction with the teenagers, the community involvement and the hours.

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Question #3 Why do you think you would be a good teacher?

1. I do not have a good reason. I tried it for one year and liked it.
2. Because people like me, because I believe in education.
3. I want to teach and learn from the students that I teach. I want to be where optimism is and be with the youth. I also want to help people use their minds and be productive citizens instead of disliking school and becoming dropouts.
4. I know I am a good teacher because I try hard to ensure student success and my ability has been recognized by supervisors.
5. Because I had a difficult time adjusting when I was in high school. I think I could relate to some of the things the students who are having a difficult time adjusting are going through.
6. I seem to be able to get ideas across to others and enjoy working with people in an informal setting.
7. I know learning can be fun and exciting, I intend to let my students discover the same thing.
8. Because I am good at what I do (art).
9. Because I have a wide variety of knowledge and get along well with young people.
10. Because I am patient and willing to help others learn.

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Question #4 What problems have you encountered since graduation or with this program?

1. Difficult to schedule classes unless you take off work and go during the day and night.
2. Not many undergraduate education classes are offered on extension.
3. Child care difficulties.

4. Internships are next to impossible to obtain - student teaching is usually necessary but does not pay money, so it is a second choice.
5. There are not many jobs in Psychology for a BA.
6. Sometimes courses offered in the major area are not offered in 2-3 semesters so it is difficult to schedule courses to complete study.
7. The last university I attended there was so much enmity in the department that I resigned from the university.
8. Employment in my field (plants) depends on who not what you know.
9. I wish I had majored in education to begin with.
10. I wanted to be in the business world and it was a mistake.
11. My initial career choice is not compatible with marriage and children.
12. My college degree was not practical or useful.
13. I chose a field of study that requires a graduate degree for career fulfillment.
14. Unemployment is hard to deal with. Agriculture related jobs are hard to come by - especially for women.

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After careful examination of the data compiled during this research study and interviews with the students enrolled in the program, it is the conclusion of these authors that the clinical component of this program or any alternate certification program is essential. The training provided, the supervision exercised and the confidence gained on the part of the intern cannot be attained through any other means. It is felt that the success enjoyed by students completing this program hinges on a successful combination of education coursework, subject area expertise and clinical experience. Elimination of any of these three components could seriously jeopardize the chances for success in these students.

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